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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 6th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 17 February 1994, at 3 p.m.

President:	Mr. ANSARI	(India)
later:	Mr. SERSALE di CERISANO (Vice-Chairman)	(Argentina)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

PRESENTATION BY THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME ON THE THEME "BUILDING A NEW UNDP: AGENDA FOR CHANGE" (continued)

1. Mr. SERSALE di CERISANO (Argentina) said that his delegation was in full agreement with the nine goals contained in slide 11 of the Administrator's presentation, entitled "Building a new UNDP: agenda for change", since they were well-defined and capable of producing a multiplier effect on activities conducted at the national level. With regard to operational activities, he wished to know how the increase in funds for specific purposes would be reflected in the programming of resources for the sixth programming cycle.

2. Mr. BANGALI (Sierra Leone) asked what steps the Administrator intended to take to address the problem of the declining aid constituency and lack of a specific United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) constituency. A further reduction in resources available for the least developed countries (LDCs) would result in their further impoverishment and create additional social problems and political instability. He wished to know what the Administrator intended to do to ensure the adequate distribution of resources to LDCs. Finally, he inquired what the Programme was doing to improve the status of women in the United Nations system.

3. Mr. RAMOUL (Observer for Algeria) asked what strategies the Programme was currently implementing, or planned to implement, in order to ensure both the autonomy of UNDP and the autonomy of recipient countries.

4. Mr. STELZER (Observer for Austria) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with all the points made in slides 8, 9 and 11. He requested the Administrator to define more clearly the changes he wished to make in the Programme. If such changes were organizational, the Administrator should indicate how he planned to restructure the Programme; if they were strategic, the Administrator should define the sub-goals; if they were operational, his delegation looked forward to the outcome of the forthcoming meeting of resident representatives.

5. Mr. ŽEBRÁKOVSKÝ (Observer for the Czech Republic) said that his delegation supported the streamlining and simplification of administrative processes within UNDP, which would enable the Programme to implement its goals more efficiently. The question of streamlining should be linked with inter-agency cooperation. A number of specialized agencies, such as the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), were also taking measures to improve their efficiency and effectiveness, and UNDP should coordinate its efforts with those agencies.

6. The Programme operated an extensive world-wide communications and computer network, which made it possible to distribute documents, papers and other information in electronic form. That would enable delegations to receive information quickly, without having to wait until documents were published and distributed.

7. Mr. ELIASHIV (Observer for Israel) asked to what extent UNDP was planning to participate in global, interregional and regional projects aimed at

(Mr. Eliashiv, Observer, Israel)

alleviating mass poverty and malnutrition, and in multilateral projects that addressed issues such as desertification, food and agriculture, national capacity-building, the transfer and adaptation of technology, and training programmes.

8. Mr. MALLYA (Observer for the United Republic of Tanzania) requested the Administrator to comment on the major shift in the distribution of resources for LDCs within the Programme.

9. Mr. ROHNER (Observer for Switzerland) said that, after more than 25 years of development cooperation, it was time for UNDP to listen to its partners in developing countries. The needs of those countries should be reflected in country strategy papers, and the priorities for UNDP country programmes should be defined at the field level. The role of UNDP should be that of a team member; rather than trying to lead all other participants in the development process, the Programme should endeavour to facilitate coordination among them.

10. Mr. ALMEDA SANGALO (Portugal) said that, in his "Ten-point plan for new international cooperation for development", the Administrator should specify that the least developed countries would be the principal beneficiaries of the Programme's new policies.

11. Mr. HALDEA (India) said that, at its next session, the Board should focus its attention on developing specific strategies and plans for the implementation of the goals and objectives the Administrator had presented.

12. Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan) asked how the changes in the role of UNDP would affect the Economic and Social Council's discussion of operational activities. While the Administrator had pointed out that priorities should be set at the field level, it appeared that the Programme was still taking a "top-down" approach in which it defined the priorities of developing countries. The six themes that had been adopted for the fifth programming cycle should serve only as indicators of what had to be done at the field level. However, there had been certain occasions when developing countries had been told that they had to adhere strictly to those themes; that eroded the Programme's flexibility.

13. If 80 to 85 per cent of indicative planning figures (IPFs) were allocated to LDCs, only about 20 per cent remained for the rest of the developing countries and the economies in transition. While her delegation fully supported the extremely important role of UNDP, it found that the Programme's resources were not commensurate with its ambitious programme.

14. The Programme had a fundamental role to play in coordinating the activities of the United Nations system at the field level. However, there was a plethora of agencies involved in the development process at the field level, and the Programme's coordinating role in the field had not been very effective. In the light of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 47/199, which strengthened the resident coordinator system, she wished to know how the Executive Board planned to maintain the Programme as the best pool of qualified development professionals eligible for appointment as resident coordinators.

15. Mr. SPETH (Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) said, by way of clarification, that the proportion of IPF resources allocated to the poorer countries was not decreasing but increasing, a trend the Governing Council had supported. Fifty-nine per cent of those resources went to the LDCs, whereas 87 to 89 per cent went to countries with incomes of $750 or less per capita; the latter was not strictly an LDC category. Traditionally, as documented by the Human Development Report, development cooperation assistance had been poorly allocated in relation to country need; UNDP was to be commended for countering that trend. Furthermore, the fact that the articulated goals of UNDP overlapped with those of other development assistance programmes around the world indicated that it was focusing on the real needs of countries. Among the roles played by the various agencies concerned, UNDP had the signal position of representing the United Nations.

16. It was indeed the case that non-core funding had increased while core funding had stagnated; UNDP's resource mobilization priority was therefore to achieve an increase in core funding. The decline had been stemmed for the following year, and ideally core resources could again begin to grow. Although strong programmes helped to mobilize additional non-core resources, that approach involved risks. The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) was one such example. Such funds should not be treated as isolated programmes, but should be integrated at the country level.

17. He agreed that the process of developing measures to promote relevance and accountability should begin in earnest. UNDP must set targets and goals for measuring its progress in the interests of inculcating a new sense of accountability.

18. Technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) was a UNDP priority: he pointed out, in particular, the launching of a sustainable agriculture programme for South-South cooperation by the Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation (BPPE) and mainline UNDP programmes.

19. Interest had been expressed in the establishment of development indicators other than that of gross national product (GNP). The human development index had begun to change that system. Efforts were currently under way, in the context of the Human Development Report, to move from a relative to an absolute scale in human development assessment; in other words, it should be gauged in terms of improvements that had taken place in a country, rather than by comparison with the progress of other countries. In a related context, the Statistical Office was studying ways to integrate natural resource accounting into national income accounts, an antiquated system which needed reform.

20. He agreed that UNDP must develop a coherent, focused sense of mission so as to resist the current centrifugal trend which favoured the broad proliferation of programmes. He also agreed that the national capacity-building process needed to be expedited. As called for by General Assembly resolution 47/199, a more aggressive programme approach was required: the lapse between the conception of a project and its implementation was too long. If UNDP was to develop a non-governmental constituency, flexibility would be required. In that regard, other United Nations programmes enjoyed more flexibility than did UNDP, which was perhaps doing itself a disservice by limiting its options.

(Mr. Speth, UNDP)

Funding would be required for engaging a wide range of actors to work with UNDP towards achieving its goals.

21. Comments had been made on modifying the structure of UNDP and strengthening its personnel so as to operationalize ideas successfully. Volume II of the Transition Team Report had addressed that question; many country programme officials had, however, found it biased towards a headquarters point of view.

22. In his view, UNDP should strive to participate in global programmes. In particular, it should take a leading role both in supporting the drafting of a convention on desertification and in implementing the eventual agreement. The future would, he felt, show that the long-awaited North-South compact, or global bargain, had been achieved over the course of time.

23. Beyond question, UNDP programmes must be founded on the needs and priorities of the countries themselves. Any and all future discussions must focus on the interplay between those concerns and the development of system-wide themes and focal points. It should not be forgotten that UNDP was in operation because and only because its priorities were the priorities of the countries it served.

24. Lastly, as requested by General Assembly resolution 47/199, efforts were afoot to broaden the pool of resident coordinators, who played a crucial role in the UNDP system. At the recent Bangkok meeting of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP), new personnel-selection procedures had been developed which allowed for recommendations from many areas, including the bilateral programmes and agencies.

25. Ms. JANJUA (Pakistan) requested the addition to the list of international consensuses and agreements of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade and the declaration of the 18th Special Session, which had set out parameters for development cooperation and assistance.

26. Mr. Sersale di Cerisano (Argentina), Vice-President, took the Chair.

HIV AND DEVELOPMENT NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL OFFICERS

27. The PRESIDENT said that in June 1993, the Governing Council had approved, in principle, the request to establish a limited network of up to 22 National Officer posts to support the role of resident coordinators/resident representatives in the national response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, subject to certain reviews. Drawing attention to documents DP/1994/L.1 and DP/1994/5, he expressed his hope that the Board would confirm the approval already given by the Governing Council on that matter.

28. Ms. REID (Director, HIV and Development Programme) said that the Governing Council had requested UNDP to conduct a study on field-level coordination on the HIV epidemic. It had been concluded that UNDP had a significant role to play in development facets of the epidemic but lacked the capacity to plan or administer related field-level programmes. In the budget estimates for the biennium 1994-1995, contained in document DP/1993/45, nearly $45 million had been cut

(Ms. Reid)

from the UNDP core budget; an integral thrust of the strategy had been to replace international staff in field office positions with national professional officers in two key areas, the environment and HIV and development. That decision was part of the overall UNDP strategy to build up national capacity. The drafting group of the Governing Council had suggested that those posts should assist in studying and addressing the determinants and impact of the epidemic on all countries with UNDP country programmes. The Governing Council, in its decision 93/35, had approved in principle the establishment of those posts and document DP/1994/5, on HIV and National Professional Officers, had been prepared in response to that decision. The drafting group had expressed concern that the placement of those field officers should not be delayed and had stressed that both the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Management Committee Task Force on HIV/AIDS should reach agreement on the functions outlined for the national professional officers. It also deemed that decision should be reviewed in the light of new proposals mooted at the World Health Assembly (WHA) the previous month, and that a study on the feasibility of a new joint and co-sponsored programme on HIV and development should be conducted.

29. The terms of reference set out in document DP/1994/5 had been developed on the basis of lengthy consultations, and incorporated textual amendments formulated by the Global Programme on Aids (GPA) and the Task Force. The World Health Organization (WHO) should continue to be responsible for building national capacity to address the health and biomedical aspects of the AIDS epidemic. Any role for UNDP and other bodies of the United Nations system should be complementary to that of WHO. The need for coordination was recognized in the WHO/UNDP Memorandum of Understanding for the implementation of the WHO/UNDP Alliance to Combat HIV and AIDS signed in July 1993, which gave WHO and UNDP joint responsibility for the development of a multidimensional programme at the national and international levels.

30. Many factors facilitated the spread of the AIDS virus, including poverty, underemployment and unemployment, labour market structures and other social, economic, political and environmental causes of the mobility of people. Those factors determined which and how many individuals were infected and how quickly they were infected. The HIV and AIDS epidemic not only affected economic growth, it raised questions regarding the mechanisms used in development assistance, such as how credit could be used to lessen poverty and expand production in communities where repayment schedules could not be met owing to high rates of HIV infection. In addition, new approaches to education, training and employment creation in seriously infected populations were needed. Such questions lay behind the proposed terms of reference contained in document DP/1994/5 and would shape the work of the National Professional Officers (NPOs).

31. A growing understanding of those dimensions of the epidemic had led Governments to draw increasingly upon the expertise of UNDP and other United Nations bodies. At present, a total of 76 UNDP field offices were working actively in the area of HIV and development. It was estimated that by the end of the fifth cycle, approximately $100 million would have been allocated or committed to HIV and development. Thus, there was a clear need for in-house staff in the field offices to assist the Resident Representative in those areas. The 22 posts under consideration had been allocated to those field offices that

were most active and most in need. NPO functions were temporary and would be carried out in the interim until the new joint and co-sponsored United Nations programme on HIV and AIDS was established. UNDP, along with the World Bank, was working to ensure that all agencies achieved greater coordination and reached a technical consensus on the most sustainable ways of responding to the epidemic.

32. Mr. EIDHAMMER (Norway), speaking also on behalf of Sweden and Finland, said that the three delegations endorsed the secretariat's proposal to establish 22 new NPO posts, but did so with certain reservations. While UNDP should not be prevented from going ahead with its plans for greater involvement in combating AIDS while awaiting the establishment of a joint programme, it should first ensure that the role of the new NPOs would be fully compatible with that programme, if and when it was established and that UNDP resources would be used in accordance with that programme. Secondly, any decision regarding the country placement of such officers should be taken jointly with the Global Programme on AIDS (GPA).

33. Mr. BARNETT (United Kingdom) said that there was a pressing need to have more people working on AIDS issues at the field level. He agreed that the work of the NPOs should be coordinated closely with the joint co-sponsored programme. However, since it would take a year or more to establish such a programme, it would be most pragmatic to agree to the appointment of the 22 posts on the conditions suggested by the representative of Norway.

34. Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada) said that any decisions taken by UNDP should be consistent with the positions adopted by other United Nations bodies. She did not believe that consensus had been reached with regard to the NPO new posts. In particular, the report of the Administrator (DP/1994/5) needed clarification in three areas: the proposed locations for the new posts, the comparative advantage and complementary role of UNDP in a unified response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and, finally, the degree to which the new positions would be devoted strictly to HIV/AIDS development activities. Until those issues were clarified, Canada would not be able to approve the proposed appointment of the 22 officers.

35. Mr. DIECKERT (Germany) said that the report of the Administrator (DP/1994/5) emphasized the urgent need for better cooperation in the area of HIV/AIDS activities and raised questions which required clarification before any definite decision with regard to the 22 posts was taken. If the NPO posts were to be transitional, it should be made clear what was to become of the NPOs once the new co-sponsored programme was established. Since WHO would eventually have the lead function in such a programme, it was essential that WHO recommendations be integrated into work of the NPOs. Finally, it would be helpful to learn the country locations of the new posts.

36. It appeared that the Executive Board had two options: either it could invite the Administrator to provide further information and then take its decision or it could decide during the current session on condition that the implementation of the posts would be postponed until the questions had been answered satisfactorily. In order to avoid further delay on the matter, his delegation preferred the second option.

37. Mr. MICHEL (France), supporting the representatives of Canada and Germany, said that final decision on the proposal was premature. UNDP should first adopt, at its annual session, a resolution to recommend the establishment of a joint co-sponsored programme to combat AIDS, administered by WHO.

38. Ms. LALIME (United States of America) said that her delegation shared the views expressed by the representatives of Canada and France. It saw a conflict between the build-up of UNDP staff for HIV/AIDS-related activities and the proposal to create a co-sponsored programme which would encompass UNDP staff. The Executive Board should defer action until the issue of the co-sponsored AIDS programme was resolved. The United States strongly supported the proposal for such a programme, and believed it would be helpful if the governing boards of all agencies concerned endorsed the proposal as the Executive Board of WHO had done in January 1994.

39. Mr. HORIGUICHI (Japan) agreed with previous speakers that a decision on the appointment of the new posts would be premature and said that his delegation would like to see the establishment of a comprehensive United Nations plan for the joint co-sponsored programme before any decision on recruitment was taken.

40. Ms. NOTEBOOM (Observer for the Netherlands) said that the scope of the AIDS problem was such as to warrant a joint and co-sponsored programme to combat the epidemic. In 1993, the UNDP Governing Council had agreed in principle to the recruitment of the 22 NPOs in question on condition that a review of UNDP and WHO/GPO staff was conducted, consultations were held with the Task Force on HIV/AIDS Coordination, and the approach taken was in line with the establishment of a joint and co-sponsored United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS. Only if the outcome of the review and the consultations was positive should final approval be given.

41. However, document DP/1994/5 left some questions unanswered regarding those conditions. In paragraph 13 it stated that the consultation with WHO/GPA had been undertaken and the terms of reference had been revised, but did not indicate whether consensus had been reached with WHO/GPA, nor did it describe the activities of the different organizations at the country level, an understanding of which was required in order to avoid overlapping. In addition, her delegation understood that the Task Force had made some critical comments which were not reflected in the report. Moreover, the terms of reference given in paragraph 15 largely duplicated the duties of the committee that would be established on the basis of option A in the study on a joint and co-sponsored programme submitted to the WHO Executive Board. If those terms of reference applied only to the period prior to the establishment of the joint co-sponsored programme, that would be acceptable, but the report also stated that the NPOs would retain their positions thereafter. Lastly, her delegation was surprised, given the lack of clarity as to whether the three conditions had been met, that UNDP had initiated the recruitment process for the NPOs. As long as it remained unclear whether the third of those conditions, in particular, had been fulfilled, such action was premature.

42. Her delegation believed that the Economic and Social Council should take the final decision regarding the establishment of the joint co-sponsored programme, but doubted whether the Council would be able to do so at its next session, as elements relating to the cost and governance of the programme were

(Ms. Noteboom, Observer, Netherlands)

mission from option A. It therefore urged UNDP to work out, in close collaboration with the other parties concerned, a comprehensive proposal for a joint co-sponsored United Nations programme.

43. Mr. MONGBE (Observer for Benin) said that while his delegation agreed that consistent and coordinated system-wide United Nations action was needed, it was extremely concerned at the growing bureaucratic spirit in the United Nations system. It also felt that some aspects of document DP/1994/5, particularly paragraphs 13 and 20, needed further clarification. The United Nations must act swiftly, because HIV and AIDS were spreading rapidly jeopardizing human development, and a prompt decision by the Board was therefore called for.

44. Mr. BABA (Observer for Uganda) agreed with the representative of France that the Executive Board should deal with the issue of HIV/AIDS as a matter of priority. Indeed, while the Administrator had emphasized sustainable human development as the main focus of the UNDP agenda to the twenty-first century, that agenda could not be implemented if the problem of HIV/AIDS was not dealt with decisively. As the posts had already been approved in principle, the hesitation among Board members was hard to understand. He joined the representative of Benin in appealing to all members of the Board to reconsider their position and support the proposal.

45. Mr. BANGALI (Sierra Leone) said that as the HIV/AIDS pandemic was already devastating a considerable portion of Africa, it was urgent to find ways of putting an end to it. The Governing Council had given its approval under decision 93/35 for the establishment of the 22 national officer posts; the WHO/UNDP Memorandum of Understanding had come up with more than a pragmatic approach, and there was no reason for the Executive Board to delay the implementation of that decision. He therefore appealed to members of the Board to authorize the establishment of the posts without further delay, as the advice offered by the national officers would be extremely useful in helping to stem the spread of the pandemic.

46. Ms. REID (Director, HIV and Development Programme) said, with respect to paragraph 13 of document DP/1994/5, that every textual amendment proposed by WHO/GPA and by the Task Force had been incorporated in the text of paragraph 15 of the terms of reference before the Board. Consultations had also been held with GPA and the Task Force with respect to the qualifications and location of the officers.

47. On the question of costs, she noted there had been a cut of $45 million in the core budget, part of which was accounted for by the replacement of international by national posts. The NPO proposal thus entailed no additional costs.

48. In relation to paragraph 20 of document DP/1994/5 and the concern raised by a number of delegations as to the role of national professional officers after the establishment of the new joint and co-sponsored programme, UNDP would, where requested, continue to provide active support, through its field office staff and resident representatives, to national responses to the epidemic; however, the coordination function would be handled by the staff of the new programme. In the interim, the NPO posts would be used to assist the resident coordinator

(Ms. Reid)

in coordinating activities in the area of HIV and AIDS. In that connection, a number of resident representatives were very actively trying to develop an inter-agency system-wide country strategy on HIV and AIDS.

49. Where coordination was concerned, at the headquarters level UNDP was trying to forge a common understanding and consensus among all headquarters agencies on how best to address HIV and AIDS. Together with the World Bank, it had started work on those issues within the framework of the inter-agency group for the joint and co-sponsored programme. At the field level, most field officers already had inter-agency coordination committees on HIV.

50. She would welcome further comments on the terms of reference in order to make sure that all the conditions set down in June 1993 and at the current meeting were met.

51. The PRESIDENT suggested that the meeting should be adjourned to permit informal consultations which he hoped would enable the Board to find common ground.

52. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.